DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 243 043 CG 017 414

AUTHOR Bumba, Russ; And Others
TITLE An Evaluation of Life in the Residence Halls at Indiana University from an Ecosystem Perspective: 1983.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 23p.; For related documents, see ED 170 665, ED 200 884, ED 217 302, and ED 232 086.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change Strategies; College Students; *Dormitories; *Group Experience; Higher Education; Participant Satisfaction; *Participation; *Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; Student College Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Indiana University

ABSTRACT

An ecosystem approach to evaluation attempts to involve those responding to the evaluation in the process of redesigning the environment. To evaluate residence hall life at Indiana University in 1983 using an ecosystem approach, 799 systematically selected college residence hall inhabitants (58% female, 49% freshmen) completed a questionnaire including forced-choice items and an environmental referrant section. In the environmental referrant section, students identified not more than five items on which they felt strongly, and described why they felt as they did and how the issues could be enhanced. The results of the 1983 study were compared with previous survey results from 1978 to 1982. Conlusions drawn from the results indicated that residence hall programming efforts had improved over the years and students were more satisfied with the programs available in the halls in 1983 than over the past six years. Residence hall staff were highly regarded by students, especially custodians and resident assistants. Student government was doing a good job of providing leadership opportunities for students and responded well to student needs. Printed material that was provided to students was adequate, and study conditions and the general atmosphere in the halls were perceived positively by students. Food service was doing a fairly good job of meeting student needs. Finally, students liked living in the residence halls. (The evaluation questionnaire and data analysis per questionnaire item are appended.) (BL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED243043

AN EVALUATION OF LIFE IN THE RESIDENCE HALLS AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY FROM AN ECOSYSTEM PERSPECTIVE: 1983

Russ Bumba
Brenda Campbell
Douglas Oblander
John Schuh
Robert Thomas

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

John H. Schuh

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CG 017414

The purpose of this report is to present the results of an evaluation of life in the residence halls of Indiana University conducted during Fall, 1983. Over the years life in the I.U. residence halls has been evaluated using the ecosystem perspective, which attempts to involve those subjects responding to the evaluation in the process of redesigning the environment. While this report summarizes the results for the undergraduate residence hall system, another report is available concerning graduate housing. Additionally, reports are available for each undergraduate residence center. The results of the survey conducted in each of the residence halls is provided to the community councils which, in turn, are to develop plans for addressing problems or concerns identified by the results of the report.

While Indiana University is not the only institution of higher education in the country that conducts this kind of survey annually, to the best of our knowledge this survey has been conducted for more consecutive years at IU than any other college or university. The importance of it lies less with the general results for the system and more with what specific changes can be made at the center level to address the needs and concerns of students. If no changes are made to address the needs of students, this evaluation becomes nothing more than a reporting exercise. If adjustments are made, then the student environment can be changed and strengthened to provide a better educational experience for students.

The ecosystems approach to environmental assessment is different from many paper and pencil assessments. Whereas many such assessments simply solicit student opinions and evaluations concerning a number of research questions, this approach attempts to involve the respondents in reshaping their environment through the use of environmental referrents.

Environmental referrents are opportunities students have to identify the items they feel most strongly about in the structured questionnaire, indicate why they feel strongly about these items, and recommend actions to enhance them.

Environmental assessment projects have been conducted on the Bloomington campus during the Fall of 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1983. This paper will report the results of the project conducted in 1983 and compare and contrast the results of the 1983 project with those of the projects conducted in previous years.

Method

Sampling

The sample for this project was drawn on a systematic basis. Each center, with the exception of Collins Living Learning Center, drew a sample of 100 student participants. Due to its smaller size, 50 Collins residents were included in the sample. The students chosen to participate were identified by use of a roster of student residents. The total population of each center (except Collins) was divided by 100. The resulting quotient was the number used to identify students included in the sample. For example, in a center of 1100 students, the resulting quotient was 11. Thus, every 11th student listed on the roster was included in the sample. While this sampling method is not random, it was considered to be reasonably representative, since each living unit had a minimum of one student included in the sample. In nearly all cases, several students from each living unit were included in the sample.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this project was developed by the authors. It was based on the one that had been employed in previous assessment

projects at Indiana University. Representatives from the Halls of Residence Department and the Residence Halls Association were invited to submit items for inclusion in the questionnaire, and they did so. Additionally, the community councils of the various residence centers were asked to submit not more than five items that addressed specific concerns of individual centers. All of the centers submitted special questions, which often concerned such matters as programs unique to the centers or library usage. For the forced choice items, a seven point Likert-type scale was used (7=very strongly agree, 1=very strongly disagree). A unique feature of the instrument was the environmental referrent section. This section, which has been noted earlier in this report, gave students the opportunity to go back through the questionnaire and identify not more than five items they felt very strongly about, in a positive or negative sense. They were asked to describe why they felt strongly about the items and then indicate how the issues addressed in the items could be enhanced. This method encourages students to become directly involved in the process of redesigning their environment to better meet their needs. A copy of the questionnaire is included as Appendix A.

Data Collection

The questionnaires were distributed to the potential respondents through the resident assistant staff. The potential respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire and return them to a designated place in the center. All data were collected during the week of October 31-November 4, 1983.

Data Analysis

Complete reports of the results were prepared using SPSS computer programs which yielded frequency distributions, modes, means, medians

and histograms for each center as well as for the residence hall system. Moreover, means, medians and modes were computed for sub-groups within each center's sample along the following lines: the unit within which the students lived; their class standing; their sex; and whether or not they had lived in their present residence center prior to Fall, 1983. These additional data are especially useful in determining the impact of residential life for specific groups of students, such as sophomore women, freshmen men, or students who have lived in the residence hall in previous years.

Results

Of the 950 students included in the sample, 799 completed the questionnaire, for a response rate of 84.1%. Reflecting the general residence hall population, the largest group of respondents by class was freshmen, followed by sophomores, juniors and seniors. A summary of the class standing of the respondents is listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Class Standing of Respondents

Class Standing	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Freshman	391	48.9
Sophomore	243	30.4
Junior	106	13.3
Senior	48	6.0
Graduate	2	.3
No response	9	1.1
Total	799	100.0

More women than men participated in this study, which reflects the fact that more women than men live in the residence halls. Nearly 58% of the participants were women, while the balance were men. The sex of the respondents is reported in Table 2.

Table 2

Sex of Respondents

Sex	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Female	461	57.7
Male	317	39.7
No response	21	2.6
Total	799	100.0

The largest percentage of respondents reported that they were living in their present residence hall for the first semester. Over 64% indicated that they were living in their residence center for the first semester, while the balance, excluding the non-respondents, had lived in the hall previously. A summary of these results are listed in Table 3.

Table 3

First Semester Lived in the Present Residence Center

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	516	64.6
No	269	33.7
No response	14	1.8
Total	799	100.1*

*Does not equal 100.0% due to rounding.

Means, medians and standard deviations for each individual item are listed in Table 4. Most items elicited a mean score ranging from 4.00 to 6.00. One (having the opportunity to study in alternative residence hall areas) had a mean score of over 6.00. One item, which dealt with food service, had a mean score below 4.00.

The results of the 1983 study are compared with those from previous years in Table 5. Six items had the highest mean score for the six years the study has been conducted. For none of the items was the mean score for 1983 the lowest over the six years of the study.

Discussion

By grouping answers to questions that have a similar nature or theme, conclusions can be drawn about the results of this survey. This next section will attempt to analyze a series of clusters that can be drawn from the instrument.

Residence Hall Programs

A number of items showed improvement in this area, as compared with previous years. Such programmatic offerings as guest speakers, opportunities for cultural activities, opportunities for meeting with faculty, opportunities for center social activities and opportunities for personal development activities all had the highest mean score since the studies began. On the other hand, the mean scores themselves indicate room for improvement. Other program areas, such as unit social activities and recreational opportunities, were regarded very well by students.

Residence Hall Staff

Generally, residence hall staff were perceived very positively. Included in these items were office staff, resident assistants, custodians, food service servers, and dining hall managers. Custodians and resident

assistants, especially, were rated highly, with a mean score of 5.68 for each group of staff.

Student Government

Three items examined student government (providing opportunities for leadership, responsiveness to student needs, and accessibility of center officers). The respondents evaluated each area positively, with the mean scores ranging from 4.43 to 4.79.

Printed Material

Students seem reasonably satisfied with the printed material they received in their residence center (The Ins and Outs, The Key, and other printed material). The responses to each of these source of information were very positive, as has been the case over the course of this evaluation project.

Study Conditions and Order

For lack of a better way to characterize these items, a number of items dealt with safety and security, study conditions, and the enforcement of rules and regulations.

Study conditions and the opportunities for alternative study areas were evaluated as adequate and excellent, respectively. Study conditions always can be improved, and represent an ongoing high priority concern for residence hall staff.

Students reported that they knew the rules of the center (5.58 mean) and that they feel quite safe in their residence hall (5.47 mean). They indicated that they believe the university's rules and regulations are enforced rather fairly (5.01).

Food Service

Providing a food service that meets the various needs of so many different students is a challenging and difficult task. Food service

personnel, such as the managers and counter servers received positive responses from students, and a concept inherent in the free flowing system to be instituted during the Spring term was received positively. On the other hand, there were some negative comments about students' looking forward to meal time, which, to a great extent, can be attributed to a certain amount of repetition that can be found in standardized meal programs.

Do Students Like Living in the Residence Halls?

This question is central to this study. The mean score of students' responses (5.35) indicated that students are quite positive about their residence hall experience. Over half the students responding to this item rated it as a "6" or "7" on a seven-point scale, which would indicate a very positive response by over half those completing the instrument.

Conclusions

On the basis of the data developed by this evaluation, several conclusions can be drawn:

1. Residence hall programming efforts have shown improvement over the years and students seem more satisfied with the programs available in the halls this past year than over the six years this study has been conducted.

2. Residence hall staff are highly regarded by students, especially the custodians and resident assistants.

3. Student government is doing a good job of providing leadership opportunities for students and responds rather well to student needs.

4. The printed material that is provided to students is very adequate.

5. Study conditions and the general atmosphere in the halls, while not perfect, are perceived fairly positively by students.

6. Food service is doing a fairly good job of meeting students' needs, in probably the most difficult area of services provided for students.

7. Students like living in the residence halls at Indiana University. This conclusion, more than any other, provides a summary of how satisfied students are with their living arrangements, and the data indicated that students find it to be an enjoyable experience.

Table 4

Item by Item Responses

	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. The "Ins and Outs," distributed at registration, provides an adequate description of services, resources and regulations to students on campus.	5.202	5.121	1.182
2. There are adequate opportunities for social activities in my living unit (house, floor).	5.412	5.148	.053
3. I am satisfied with the opportunities I have to hear guest speakers in my center.	4.226	4.319	1.536
4. The Halls of Residence staff are responsive to my needs concerning physical facilities.	4.780	4.665	1.559
5. I am able to study in my room when I wish to.	4.877	4.544	1.956
6. My resident assistant is available to meet my needs.	5.988	5.684	1.40
7. The Halls of Residence Office staff are responsive and helpful in providing main desk services.	5.462	5.178	1.546
8. Student government in my residence center offers me opportunities to participate in leadership positions.	4.625	4.792	1.388
9. I am satisfied with the opportunities I have to meet with faculty members in my residence center (outside of class).	4.063	4.112	1.465
10. My student government responds adequately to the needs expressed by residents of this center.	4.356	4.439	1.346
11. I have adequate opportunities to participate in recreational activities in my residence center.	5.776	5.586	1.278
12. I know the rules of my residence center.	5.813	5.582	1.292

Table 4 Con'd.

Item by Item Responses

	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
13. There are adequate opportunities for cultural events in my center, i.e., music, arts, crafts.	4.189	4.254	1.541
14. I have an opportunity to talk with someone in my center about personal concerns, such as homesickness, relationships, or academics.	4.594	4.699	1.671
15. There are adequate opportunities for social activities in my center.	5.337	5.136	1.455
16. The Key (Guide to Graduate Living in Eigenmann Center) does a good job of describing residence hall living at Indiana University.	4.453	4.716	1.203
17. The custodian in my living unit keeps the area clean.	6.203	5.683	1.627
18. I have an opportunity to study in alternative areas of the residence center, such as libraries or study halls.	6.272	6.011	1.179
19. I have received adequate printed information which describes the services and resources available to students in my center.	5.348	5.152	1.470
20. I feel safe and secure in my residence center.	5.807	5.470	1.501
21. The counter servers in my dining hall are helpful and courteous.	4.930	4.638	1.739
22. I look forward to meal time in my dining hall.	3.429	3.403	1.862
23. When I have a problem in my center, I am aware of the person(s) to contact to remedy the situation.	4.860	4.695	1.571
24. I am in favor of a policy allowing residents to enter the dining hall only once per meal. This would help prevent non-residents from entry and aid in maintaining low board rates. This policy would not rule out second servings for residents or guests.	4.480	4.390	1.976

Table 4 Con'd.

Item by Item Responses

	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
25. I am aware of personal development activities such as assertiveness and leadership workshops being offered in my center.	4.150	4.121	1.584
26. The food manager in my dining hall is helpful in assisting with exchange dinners, special diets, sick trays or food and equipment for floor functions.	4.270	4.381	1.468
27. I like living in my residence center.	5.636	5.354	1.486
28. University rules and regulations are enforced consistently in my center.	5.149	5.013	1.437
29. My center's student government officers are accessible and responsive to problems and questions I have about the residence halls system.	4.402	4.540	1.445

Table 5

Mean Scores for the 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1983 Surveys

	$\bar{X}$ Fall 1978	$\bar{X}$ Fall 1979	$\bar{X}$ Fall 1980	$\bar{X}$ Fall 1981	$\bar{X}$ Fall 1982	$\bar{X}$ Fall 1983
1. The "Ins and Outs," distributed at registration, provides an adequate description of services and resources to students on campus.	*	5.03	5.04	5.17	5.13	5.12
2. There are adequate opportunities for social activities in my living unit (house, floor, hall).	4.92	5.16	5.24	5.21	4.96	5.15
3. Interesting, informative guest speakers make presentations in my center.	2.30	3.04	3.22	3.71	3.97	4.32
4. The Halls of Residence staff are responsive to my needs concerning physical facilities.	4.59	4.52	4.80	4.85	4.74	4.67
5. The Halls of Residence Office staff are responsive and helpful in providing main desk services.	6.02	5.26	5.31	5.15	5.20	5.19
6. I am able to study in my room when I wish to.	4.20	4.46	4.53	4.61	4.45	4.54
7. The resident assistants (resident fellows in Collins) in my center are available to meet my needs.	5.19	5.62	5.53	5.80	5.66	5.68
8. I have adequate opportunities to participate in recreational programs offered through my residence center.	5.33	5.66	5.55	5.40	5.35	5.59
9. Student government in my residence center offers me opportunities to participate in leadership positions.	4.32	5.08	4.97	4.87	4.77	4.79

Table 5 Con'd.

Mean Scores for the 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1983 Surveys

		$\bar{X}$ Fall 1978	$\bar{X}$ Fall 1979	$\bar{X}$ Fall 1980	$\bar{X}$ Fall 1981	$\bar{X}$ Fall 1982	$\bar{X}$ Fall 1983
10.	I am satisfied with the opportunities I have to meet with faculty members in my residence center.	3.41	3.90	3.91	4.09	3.91	4.11
11.	I know the rules of my residence center.	5.19	5.56	5.36	5.42	5.65	5.58
12.	The opportunity for cultural events in my center, i.e., concerts, arts and crafts, meets my needs.	3.68	3.98	4.24	4.23	4.08	4.25
13.	I have an opportunity to talk with someone in my center about personal problems, such as home-sickness, relationships, or academics.	4.40	4.87	4.98	4.95	4.82	4.70
14.	I have an opportunity to study in alternative areas of the residence center, such as libraries or study halls.	*	5.92	5.99	5.95	5.98	6.01
15.	There are adequate opportunities for social activities in my center.	4.81	5.11	5.09	5.09	5.03	5.14
16.	The Key does a good job of describing residence hall living at Indiana University.	4.68	4.96	4.66	4.37	4.74	4.72
17.	The custodian in my living unit keeps the area clean.	5.51	5.87	5.74	5.79	5.72	5.68
18.	I have received adequate printed information which describes the services and resources available to students in my center.	4.71	5.12	4.93	5.28	5.10	5.15

Table 5 Con'd.

Mean Scores for the 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1983 Surveys

		$\bar{X}$ Fall 1978	$\bar{X}$ Fall 1979	$\bar{X}$ Fall 1980	$\bar{X}$ Fall 1981	$\bar{X}$ Fall 1982	$\bar{X}$ Fall 1983
19.	I feel safe and secure in my residence center.	5.30	5.33	5.27	5.58	5.32	5.47
20.	I am in favor of a policy allowing residents to enter the dining hall only once per meal. This helps prevent non-residents from causing increased food costs which are reflected in the board rate. This does not rule out second servings for residents or paying guests.	4.36	4.77	4.13	4.55	4.40	4.39
21.	I am aware of personal development activities such as assertiveness and leadership workshops being offered in my center.	*	3.76	3.58	3.93	3.93	4.00
22.	When I have a problem in my center I am aware of the procedures to follow to remedy the situation.	*	4.54	4.56	4.63	4.90	4.70

* Did not appear in the 1978 questionnaire
1 = Very Strongly Disagree
7 = Very Strongly Agree

APPENDIX A:
THE INSTRUMENT

Indiana University

October 31, 1983

Dear Resident Student,

One of the objectives we have is to make living in the residence halls be a rewarding experience for students. Students should have a regular opportunity to provide information to organizations such as the Community Councils and the staff assigned to the various centers on how they perceive life in the center.

With that in mind, you have been selected as one of approximately 10% of the residential population to complete the attached questionnaire. It should not take more than 20 minutes to do so. The information you provide will be extremely useful in attempting to modify the environment in which you live.

We want to assure you that all responses will be anonymous. Let us thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Leland Ratliff, Director
Halls of Residence

Kent Ayers, President
Residence Halls Association

John H. Schuh, Director
Department of Residence Life

Please answer the following three questions by placing an X in the blank space that represents the best answer to the question, and then go on to the next page:

Please indicate your class standing:
Freshman _____
Sophomore _____
Junior _____
Senior _____
Graduate _____

Please indicate your sex:
Female _____
Male _____

Is this the first semester you have lived in your present residence center?

Yes _____
No _____

Please indicate your living unit: Center _____ Unit _____

PART I

Listed below are a series of statements. Please read them and on the continuum to the right of each statement, indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with it by placing an X in the appropriate blank.

The following definitions of terms may be useful to you:

Resident Assistant (Resident Fellow in LLC): This person is an upperclass or graduate student who is assigned to a floor or house and is responsible for interpersonal, social, and academic experiences of students.

Residence Life Staff: Includes Resident Assistants (Resident Fellows) and Residence Life Coordinators.

Halls of Residence Staff: Includes the Housing Manager, custodial and clerical staff.

Food Service Staff: Foods Manager, Assistant Managers, and staff.

	Very Strongly Agree (7)						Very Strongly Disagree (1)
1. The Ins and Outs (the student handbook), provides an adequate description of services, resources and regulations to students on campus.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
2. There are adequate opportunities for social activities in my living unit (house, floor).	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
3. I am satisfied with the opportunities I have to hear guest speakers in my center.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
4. The Halls of Residence staff are responsive to my needs concerning physical facilities.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
5. I am able to study in my room when I wish to.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
6. My resident assistant is available to meet my needs.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
7. The Halls of Residence Office staff are responsive and helpful in providing main desk services.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
8. Student government in my residence center offers me opportunities to participate in leadership positions	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
9. I am satisfied with the opportunities I have to meet with faculty members in my residence center (outside of class).	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
10. My student government responds adequately to the needs expressed by residents of this center.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/

	(7) Very Strongly Agree			(4) Neutral			(1) Very Strongly Disagree
11. I have adequate opportunities to participate in recreational activities in my residence center.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
12. I know the rules of my residence center.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
13. There are adequate opportunities for cultural events in my center, i.e., music, arts, crafts.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
14. I have an opportunity to talk with someone in my center about personal concerns, such as homesickness or relationships.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
15. There are adequate opportunities for social activities in my center.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
16. The Key (Guide to Graduate Living in Eigenmann Center) does a good job of describing residence hall living at Indiana University.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
17. The custodian in my living unit keeps the area clean.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
18. I have an opportunity to study in alternative areas of the residence center, such as libraries or study halls.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
19. I have received adequate printed information which describes the services and resources available to students in my center.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
20. I feel safe and secure in my residence center.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
21. The counter servers in my dining hall are helpful and courteous.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
22. I look forward to meal time in my dining hall.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
23. When I have a problem in my center, I am aware of the person(s) to contact to remedy the situation.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/

	Very Strongly Agree (7)			Neutral (4)			Very Strongly Disagree (1)
24. I am in favor of a policy allowing residents to enter the dining hall only once per meal. This would help prevent non-residents from entry and aid in maintaining low board rates. This policy would not rule out second servings for residents or guests.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
25. I am aware of personal development activities such as assertiveness and leadership workshops being offered in my center.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
26. The food manager in my dining hall is helpful in assisting with exchange dinners, special diets, sick trays or food and equipment for floor functions.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/

PART II

Now that you have completed Part I, go back through the items and identify not more than five items that you feel very strongly about, in either a positive or negative sense. Write the number of those items in the blocks provided below. Then, next to the item number, write why you feel strongly about the item, and what you would recommend to improve the situation.

ITEM NUMBER	WHY DO YOU FEEL STRONGLY ABOUT THE ITEM	WHAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION